

BERLIN, REICHSTAG

SPEECH OF OCTOBER 6, 1939

IT WAS a fateful hour, on the first of September of this year, when you met here as representatives of the German people. I had to inform you then of serious decisions which had been forced upon us as a result of the intransigent and provocative action of a certain State.

Since then five weeks have gone by. I have asked you to come here today in order to give you an account of what has passed, the necessary insight into what is happening at present and, so far as that is possible, into the future as well.

For the last two days our towns and villages have been decorated with flags and symbols of the new Reich. Bells are ringing to celebrate a great victory, which, of its kind, is unique in history. A State of no less than 36,000,000 inhabitants, with an army of almost fifty infantry and cavalry divisions, took up arms against us. Their arms were far-reaching, their confidence in their ability to crush Germany knew no bounds.

After one week of fighting there could no longer be any doubt as to the outcome. Whenever Polish troops met German units, they were driven back or dispersed. Poland's ambitious strategy for a great offensive against the territory of the Reich collapsed within the first forty-eight hours of the campaign. Death-defying in attack, advancing at an unconquerable rate of progress, infantry, armored detachments, air force and units of the navy were soon dictating the course of events.

They were masters of the situation throughout the campaign. In a fortnight's time the major part of the Polish Army was either scattered, captured, or surrounded. In the meantime, however, the German Army had covered distances and occupied regions which twenty-five years ago would have taken over fourteen months to conquer.

Even though a number of peculiarly gifted newspaper strategists in other parts of the world attempted to describe the pace at which this campaign progressed as not coming up to Germany's expectations, we ourselves all know that in all history there has scarcely been a comparable military achievement.

That the last remnants of the Polish Army were able to hold out in Warsaw, Modlin, and on Hela Peninsula until October 1 was not due to their prowess in arms, but only to our cool thinking and our sense of responsibility.

I forbade the sacrifice of more human lives than was absolutely necessary. That is to say, I deliberately released the German Supreme Command from adherence to a principle still observed in the Great War demanding that for the sake of prestige certain objectives must under all circumstances be reached within a certain time limit.

Everything which it is imperative to do will be done regardless of sacrifice, but what can be avoided will not be done.

There would have been no difficulty for us in breaking the resistance of Warsaw between the 10th and 12th of September, just as we finally broke it September 25-27, only that in the first place I wanted to spare German lives and in the second place I still clung to the hope, misdirected though it was, that the Polish side might for once be guided by responsible common sense instead of by irresponsible lunacy. But in this instance we were once more confronted with the spectacle

which we had witnessed before on the largest possible scale.

The attempt to convince the responsible Polish command - in so far as it existed - that it was futile and in fact insane to attempt resistance, especially in a city of more than a million inhabitants, proved entirely fruitless. A 'generalissimo,' who himself took to inglorious flight, forced upon the capital of his country a resistance which could never lead to anything but its destruction.

Since it was realized that Warsaw's fortifications alone were not likely to withstand the German attack, the entire city was converted into a fortress and barricaded in every direction. Batteries were mounted in every square and great courtyard, thousands of machine-gun posts manned and the whole population called up to take part in the fighting.

Sheer sympathy for women and children caused me to make an offer to those in command of Warsaw at least to let civilian inhabitants leave the city. I declared a temporary armistice and safeguards necessary for evacuation, with the result that we all waited for emissaries just as fruitlessly as we had waited at the end of August for a Polish negotiator. The proud Polish commander of the city did not even condescend to reply.

To make sure, I extended the time limit and ordered bombers and heavy artillery to attack only military objectives, repeating my proposal in vain. I thereupon made an offer that the whole suburb of Praga would not be bombarded at all, but should be reserved for the civilian population in order to make it possible for them to take refuge there.

This proposal, too, was treated with contempt on the part of the Poles. Twice I attempted to evacuate at least the international colony from the city. In this I finally succeeded after great difficulties, in the case of the Russian colony, actually at the last moment. I then ordered a general attack on the city for September 25.

The same defenders who at first considered it beneath their dignity even to reply to my humane proposals, made on grounds of humanity, then very rapidly changed face. The German attack opened on September 25, and Warsaw capitulated on the 27th.

With 120,000 men the defenders did not even attempt to break through as our German General Litzmann once did at Brzesiny with a vastly inferior force, but, on the contrary, preferred to lay down arms.

Any comparison with the Alcazar is entirely out of place. There for weeks on end Spanish heroes defied the bitterest attacks and earned a right to lasting fame. Here, on the other hand, a great city was unscrupulously exposed to destruction, only to capitulate after a forty-eight-hour assault.

The Polish soldiers as individuals fought bravely on many occasions, but their officers, beginning with the command, can only be described as irresponsible, unconscientious and inefficient. Before the bombardment of Hela I had also given orders that not a single man should be sacrificed until the most careful preparation for action had been made. There, too, surrender came at the very moment when the Germans had at length announced their intention of attacking and had begun to do so.

I have made these statements, gentlemen, with the object of forestalling the invention of historical legends, for if legend is to be woven around any who took part in this campaign, it should be woven around German soldiers who, during the attack and on the march, added yet another page to their immortal glorious record.

Legends could be woven, too, around the heavy artillery which performed untold feats of endurance in rushing to the assistance of the infantry. Men of our armored mechanized units who, with dauntless courage and heedless of counterattacks and numerical superiority of the enemy, attacked again and again are worthy of this legend.

Such a legend should also immortalize the airmen who, fearless of death and knowing that if anti-aircraft fire did not kill them in the air, they would, if forced to make a parachute landing, inevitably suffer frightful death, continued with steadfast courage to carry out reconnaissance flights and attacks with bombs or machine-gun fire whenever they were commanded to do so and whenever they found objectives.

The same is true of the brave men of our submarine fleet. If, within four weeks, we totally annihilated a State with a population of 36,000,000 and corresponding military strength, and if during this whole period our victorious arms have not suffered a single setback, this cannot be ascribed simply to good luck but constituted certain proof of fine training, excellent leadership, and indomitable courage.

Our knowledge of the strength of our fighting forces fills us all with a well of confidence, for they have not only proved that they are strong in attack, but also that they are strong in retaining what they have won. The excellent training received by the individual officers and men has been amply justified. It is this training which is responsible for the extremely few casualties which - hard as they are for the individual to bear - are on the whole far less than we ventured to expect.

Admittedly the total number of casualties gives no idea of the severity of the various encounters, for certain regiments and divisions suffered very heavy losses when they were attacked by Polish forces which were numerically superior or came into conflict with such forces when they themselves were attacking....

As I am now about to make known to you the number of our dead and wounded, I request that you rise from your seats. Though owing to the training given our troops, the effectiveness of our weapons and the command of our forces the figures do not amount to even one-twentieth of what our apprehensions had been at the outset of the campaign, we will never forget that every soldier who fell fighting brought for his people and our Reich the greatest sacrifice that man can bring.

According to the casualty list of up to September 30, 1939, which will not change materially, the total losses for the army, navy and air force, including officers, are as follows: 10,572 killed; 30,322 wounded; 3,404 missing. Unfortunately, of those missing a certain number who fell into Polish hands will probably be found to have been massacred and killed.

All our gratitude is due to the victims of the campaign in Poland, while the wounded may be assured of our best attention and care, and the families of those killed of our sympathy and help.

By the capitulation of the fortresses of Warsaw and Modlin and the surrender of Hela, the Polish campaign has come to an end. The task of safeguarding the country against vagabonding marauders, gangs of robbers and individual groups of terrorists will be carried through with all energy.

The outcome of the war was the annihilation of all Polish armies, followed by the dissolution of the Polish State. Six hundred and ninety-four thousand prisoners have set out on their march to Berlin. The amount of war material captured cannot yet be estimated.

Since the outbreak of the war, the German forces have at the same time in calm preparedness taken up positions in the West ready to meet the enemy.

The naval forces of the Reich have fulfilled their duty in the attack on the Westerplatte, Gdynia, Oxhoeft and Hela, and in protecting the Baltic Sea and the German North Sea coast our submarines are fighting in a spirit worthy of the memory of our heroes in the last war.

In the face of this historically unprecedented collapse of a structure purporting to be a State, the question in almost everybody's mind is as to the reason for such a phenomenon.

Versailles was the cradle of a Polish State which had emerged from the untold sacrifice of blood - not of Polish but of German and Russian blood. Poland, who for centuries past had proved herself incapable of existence, was in 1916 artificially begotten and in 1919 no less artificially born by a German government just as incapable of existence.

In utter disregard of almost 500 years of experience, without consideration for the lesson of historical development during many centuries, without appreciation for ethnographic conditions and with no regard for all economic expediencies, a State was constructed at Versailles which, according to its whole nature, was sooner or later bound to become the cause of a most serious crisis.

A man who, I am sorry to say, now ranks among our fiercest enemies, at that time clearly foresaw all this. I mean Mr. Lloyd George. Like so many others he sounded warning, not only at the time of the creation of that structure but also in the course of its subsequent expansion which had taken place in utter disregard of reason and right.

At that time he expressed apprehension that in that State an accumulation of conditions was being created containing the risk of conflicts which sooner or later might lead to great European complications.

As a matter of fact, conditions surrounding the structure of this new so-called State, as far as its nationalities were concerned, could not be clarified until now. It requires some knowledge of Polish census methods to realize how utterly alien to truth, and therefore irrelevant, statistics on the national composition of that territory were and are.

In 1919 the Poles laid claims to the territory where they pretended to have a majority of 95 per cent - in East Prussia, for instance - whereas a plebiscite later showed the Poles actually had reached a figure of 2 per cent.

In the State finally created, which contained parts of former Russia, Austria, and Germany, non-Polish elements were so brutally ill-treated, suppressed, tyrannized and tortured that any plebiscite depended entirely on the good will of local administrative officials for producing such results as were desired or demanded.

Nor did indisputable Polish elements receive much better recognition. And then, on top of all this, statesmen of our Western Hemisphere spoke of this kind of creation as of democracy of the fundamentals of their own system.

In that country there ruled a minority of aristocratic or non-aristocratic large, vast estate-owners and wealthy intellectuals to whom under the most favorable circumstances their own Polish compatriots were nothing but mass man power. For that reason the regime was never backed by more than 15 per cent of the total population.

The economic distress and low cultural level corresponded with these conditions. In 1919 this State took over from Prussia and also from Austria provinces which had been developed through hundreds of years of hard toil, some of them being in a most flourishing condition. Today, after

the elapse of twenty years, they are at a point of gradually turning into steppes again.

The Vistula, the river whose estuary has always been of such tremendous importance for the Polish Government, owing to the lack of any and all care is now already unsuitable for any real traffic and, depending on the season, is either an unruly stream or a dried-up rivulet.

Towns as well as villages are in a state of neglect. The roads, with very few exceptions, are badly out of repair and in a terrible condition. Anyone who travels in that country for two or three weeks will get the proper idea of the classical German term 'Polnische Wirtschaft,' meaning a 'Polish state of affairs!'

In spite of the unbearable conditions prevailing in that country, Germany endeavored to establish peaceful relations with it. During the years 1933 and 1934 I endeavored to find some equitable compromise between our national interests and our desire for the maintenance of peace with that country. There was a time, when Marshal Pilsudski was still alive, when it seemed possible for this hope to materialize were it only to a modest extent.

Unlimited patience and still greater self-restraint were called for because many of the regional Polish administrative officials took the understanding between Germany and Poland to be merely a license for the persecution and annihilation of the Germans in Poland with even less risk. In the few years up to 1922 more than one-and-a-half million Germans had been forced to leave their homes. They were hunted out, often without being able to take even their most necessary clothing.

When, in 1938, the Olsa territory went to Poland, they used the same methods against the Czechs who lived there. Often within a few hours many thousands of these had to leave their working places, their homes, their villages and towns at the shortest notice without being allowed to take anything more with them than a suitcase or a little box with clothing.

Things like this went on for years, and for years we looked on, always striving to attain some improvement in the lot of the unhappy Germans living there by establishing closer relations. It was, however, impossible to overlook the fact that every German attempt thereby to secure the removal of these intolerable conditions was taken by the Polish rulers to be nothing more than a sign of weakness, if not of stupidity.

When the Polish Government proceeded in a thousand ways gradually to subjugate Danzig as well, I endeavored, by means of practical proposals, to secure a solution whereby Danzig, in accordance with the wishes of its population, could be nationally and politically united with Germany without impairing the economic needs and so-called rights of Poland. If today any one alleges that these were ultimative demands, that allegation is a lie.

The proposals for a solution, as communicated to the Polish Government in March, 1939, were nothing but the suggestions and the ideas already discussed long ago between myself and Polish Foreign Minister Beck, except for the fact that in the spring of 1939 I thought I would be able to facilitate the acceptance of these proposals by the Polish Government in the face of their own public opinion by the offer to concede to them an equivalent.

The fact that the Polish Government at that time refused to consider a discussion of these proposals was due to two reasons: for one thing, the inflamed chauvinist powers behind the Government never intended to solve the problem of Danzig, but on the contrary already lived in the hope, expounded later in publications and speeches, of acquiring territory from the Reich far beyond the bounds of Danzig; in fact, they hoped to be in a position to attack and conquer.

'These aims, far from stopping, at East Prussia, were climaxed by a flood of publications and a continuous sequence of speeches, addresses, resolutions, etc., in addition to the incorporation of East Prussia, for the annexation of Pomerania and Silesia. The Oder represented the minimum of frontier claims and finally even the Elbe was described as the natural dividing line between Germany and Poland.

These demands, which today may appear crazy but which were then presented with fanatical seriousness, were based in a simply ridiculous manner on the assumption of a 'Polish mission of civilization' and declared justified because they were supposed to be capable of fulfillment in view of the strength of the Polish Army.

While I was inviting the then Polish Foreign Minister to take part in a conference for the discussion of our proposals, the Polish military generals were already writing about the inefficiency of the German Army, the cowardice of the German soldiers, the inferiority of the German weapons, the obvious superiority of the Polish forces and the certainty, in case of war, of defeating the Germans at the gates of Berlin and of annihilating the Reich.

The man, however, who intended, as he expressed it, to hack the German Army to pieces at the gates of Berlin, was not just an illiterate, insignificant Pole but their commander-in-chief, Rydz-Smigly, who at present resides in Rumania.

Violations and insults which Germany and her armed forces had to put up with from these military dilettantes would never have been tolerated by any other State, just as they were not expected from any other nation. No French or English generals would ever have presumed to express a judgment of the German armed forces similar to that which we heard read from the Polish side for years, particularly since March, 1939; and on the other hand no German general would have spoken in that manner of English, French or Italian soldiers.

A great deal of self-control was needed to keep calm in face of these simply shameless insults, in spite of the fact that we knew that the German armed forces could destroy and sweep away the whole of this ridiculous State and its army within a few weeks.

But this attitude, for which the Polish leaders themselves were responsible, was the fundamental reason why the Polish Government refused even to discuss the German proposals.

Another reason was that fatal promise of guarantee given to the State which, although not menaced at all, very rapidly became convinced it could afford to challenge a Great Power without risk once it was assured of the support of two Great Powers, perhaps even hoping this way to lay the foundation for realization of all its own insane ambitions.

For, as soon as Poland felt certain of that guarantee, minorities living in that country had to suffer what amounted to a reign of terror. I do not consider it my task to speak of the lot of the Ukrainians, or White Russian population, whose interests now lie in the hands of Russia.

However, I do feel it my duty to speak of the lot of those helpless thousands of Germans who carried on the tradition of those who first brought culture to that country centuries ago and whom the Poles now began to oppress and drive out. Since March, 1939, they had been victims of truly satanic terrorization. How many of them had been abducted and where they are cannot be stated even today.

Villages with hundreds of German inhabitants are now left without men because they all have been killed. In others women were violated and murdered, girls and children outraged and killed. In 1598 an Englishman - Sir George Carew - wrote in his diplomatic reports to the English

Government that the outstanding features of Polish character were cruelty and lack of moral restraint.

Since that time this cruelty has not changed. Just as tens of thousands of Germans were slaughtered and sadistically tormented to death, so German soldiers captured in fighting were tortured and massacred.

This pet lapdog of the Western democracies cannot be considered a cultured nation at all.

For more than four years I fought in the great war on the Western Front, but such things did not happen on either side.

Things that have occurred in Poland, in the past few months, and especially the last four weeks, constitute flaming accusations against those responsible for the creation of a so-called State lacking every national, historical, cultural, and moral foundation. Had only 1 per cent of these atrocities been committed in any part of the world against the English people, I should be interested to see the indignation of those gentlemen who today in hypocritical horror condemn the German or Russian procedure.

No! To grant guarantees to this State and this Government as was done could only lead to appalling disasters. Neither the Polish Government, nor the small cliques supporting it, nor the Polish nation as such were capable of measuring the responsibilities which were implied in such guarantees in Poland's favor by half of Europe.

The passionate sentiment thus aroused, together with the sense of that security which had been unconditionally guaranteed to them, counted for the behavior of the Polish Government during the period between April and August this year.

It was also the cause of the attitude they adopted toward my conciliatory proposals. The Government rejected these proposals because they felt themselves protected, or even encouraged, by public opinion and public opinion protected them and encouraged them on their way because it had been left in ignorance by its Government and particularly because in its every action it felt itself sufficiently protected from without.

All this led to an increase in the number of appalling atrocities committed against German nationals in Poland and to the rejection of all proposals for a solution and in the end to the steadily growing encroachments on actual Reich territory. It was quite comprehensible that such a state of mind interpreted German long-suffering as a weakness, that is, that every concession on Germany's part was regarded as proof of the possibility of some further aggressive steps.

A warning given Poland to refrain from sending Danzig any more notes amounting to ultimata and above all to desist from economic strangulation of that city did not ease the situation in the least; it resulted, in fact, in complete stoppage of all Danzig means of communication.

The warning to suspend or at least to take steps against the unceasing cases of murder, ill treatment and torture of German nationals in Poland had the effect of increasing these atrocities and of calling for more bloodthirsty harangues and provocative speeches from the Polish local administrative officials and military authorities.

The German proposals aiming at a last-minute agreement on a just and equitable basis were answered by a general mobilization. The German request that an intermediary should be sent, founded on a proposal made by Great Britain, was not complied with and on the second day was answered by an offensive declaration.

Under these circumstances it was obvious that if further incursions into the Reich's territory occurred, Germany's patience would be at an end. What the Poles had erroneously interpreted as weakness was in reality our sense of responsibility and my firm determination to come to an understanding if that at all was possible.

Since they believed that this patience and long suffering was a sign of weakness which would allow them to do anything, no other course remained than to show them their mistake by striking back with the weapons which they themselves had used for years.

Under these blows their State has crumbled to pieces in a few weeks and is now swept from the earth. One of the most senseless deeds perpetrated at Versailles is thus a thing of the past.

If this step on Germany's part has resulted in a community of interests with Russia, that is due not only to the similarity of the problems affecting the two States, but also to that of the conclusions which both States had arrived at with regard to their future relationship.

In my speech at Danzig I already declared that Russia was organized on principles which differ from those held in Germany. However, since it became clear that Stalin found nothing in the Russian-Soviet principles which should prevent him from cultivating friendly relations with States of a different political creed, National Socialist Germany sees no reason why she should adopt another criterion. The Soviet Union is the Soviet Union, National Socialist Germany is National Socialist Germany.

But one thing is certain: from the moment when the two States mutually agreed to respect each other's distinctive regime and principles, every reason for any mutually hostile attitude had disappeared. Long periods in the history of both nations have shown that the inhabitants of these two largest States in Europe were never happier than when they lived in friendship with each other. The Great War, which once made Germany and Russia enemies, was disastrous for both countries.

It is easy to understand that the capitalist States of the West are interested today in playing off these two States and their principles against each other. For this purpose, and until it is realized, they certainly regard the Soviet Union as a sufficiently respectable partner for the conclusion of a useful military pact. But they regard it as perfidy that their honorable approaches were rejected and in their place rapprochement took place between those two very powers who had every reason for seeking happiness for their respective peoples in developing their economic relationship along the lines of peaceful co-operation.

Months ago I stated in the Reichstag that the conclusion of the German-Russian non-aggression pact marked the turning point in the whole German foreign policy. The new pact of friendship and mutual interest since signed between Germany and the Soviet Union will insure not only peace but a constant satisfactory co-operation for both States.

Germany and Russia together will relieve one of the most acute danger spots in Europe of its threatening character and will, each in her own sphere, contribute to the welfare of the peoples living there, thus aiding to European peace in general. If certain circles today see in this pact either the breakdown of Russia or Germany - as suits them best - I should like to give them my answer.

For many years imaginary aims were attributed to Germany's foreign policy which at best might be taken to have arisen in the mind of a schoolboy.

At a moment when Germany is struggling to consolidate her own living space, which only

consists of a few hundred thousand square kilometers, insolent journalists in countries which rule over 40,000,000 square kilometers state Germany is aspiring to world domination!

German-Russian agreements should prove immensely comforting to these worried sponsors of universal liberty, for do they not show most emphatically that their assertions as to Germany's aiming at domination of the Urals, the Ukraine, Rumania, etc., are only excrescences of their own unhealthy war-lord fantasy?

In one respect it is true Germany's decision is irrevocable, namely in her intention to see peaceful, stable, and thus tolerable conditions introduced on her eastern frontiers; also it is precisely here that Germany's interests and desires correspond entirely with those of the Soviet Union. The two States are resolved to prevent problematic conditions arising between them which contain germs of internal unrest and thus also of external disorder and which might perhaps in any way unfavorably affect the relationship of these two great States with one another.

Germany and the Soviet Union have therefore clearly defined the boundaries of their own spheres of interest with the intention of being singly responsible for law and order and preventing everything which might cause injury to the other partner.

The aims and tasks which emerge from the collapse of the Polish State are, insofar as the German sphere of interest is concerned, roughly as follows:

1. Demarcation of the boundary for the Reich, which will do justice to historical, ethnographical and economic facts.
2. Pacification of the whole territory by restoring a tolerable measure of peace and order.
3. Absolute guarantees of security not only as far as Reich territory is concerned but for the entire sphere of interest.
4. Re-establishment and reorganization of economic life and of trade and transport, involving development of culture and civilization.
5. As the most important task, however, to establish a new order of ethnographic conditions, that is to say, resettle ment of nationalities in such a manner that the process ultimately results in the obtaining of better dividing lines than is the case at present. In this sense, however, it is not a case of the problem being restricted to this particular sphere, but of a task with far wider implications for the east and south of Europe are to a large extent filled with splinters of the German nationality, whose existence they cannot maintain.

In their very existence lie the reason and cause for continual international disturbances. In this age of the principle of nationalities and of racial ideals, it is utopian to believe that members of a highly developed people can be assimilated without trouble.

It is therefore essential for a far-sighted ordering of the life of Europe that a resettlement should be undertaken here so as to remove at least part of the material for European conflict. Germany and the Union of Soviet Republics have come to an agreement to support each other in this matter.

The German Government will, therefore, never allow the residual Polish State of the future to become in any sense a disturbing factor for the Reich itself and still less a source of disturbance between the German Reich and Soviet Russia.

As Germany and Soviet Russia undertake this work of re-establishment, the two States are entitled to point out that the attempt to solve this problem by the methods of Versailles has proved an utter failure. In fact it had to fail because these tasks cannot be settled sitting around a table or by simple decrees. Most of the statesmen who in Versailles had to decide on these complicated problems did not possess the slightest historical training, indeed they often had not even the vaguest idea of the nature of the task with which they were faced.

Neither did they bear any responsibility for the consequences of their action. Recognition that their work might be faulty was of no significance because in practice there was no way for a real revision. It is true that in the Treaty of Versailles provision was made for keeping open the possibility of such revisions but in reality all attempts to attain such a revision miscarried and they were bound to miscarry because the League of Nations as the competent authority was no longer morally justified to carry out such a procedure.

After America had been first to refuse to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, or to join the League of Nations, and later when other countries also felt they could no longer reconcile their presence in this organization with the interests of their respective countries, the League degenerated more and more into a clique of parties interested in the Versailles dictate.

At any rate it is a fact that none of the revisions recognized from the outset as necessary had ever been effected by the League of Nations.

Since in our time it became customary to regard a refugee government as still existing even if it consists of three members provided they have taken with them sufficient gold so as not to be an economic burden to the democratic country offering hospitality, it may be assumed that the League of Nations, too, will carry on bravely if but two nations sit there together. Perhaps even one will do!

But according to the government of the League any revision of the Versailles clauses would still be adjudicated exclusively by this illustrious organization - that is, in other words, revision would be practically impossible.

The League of Nations is not living but already a dead thing, nevertheless the peoples concerned are not dead but alive and they will uphold their vital interests, however incapable the League of Nations may be of seeing, grasping, or respecting those interests.

National Socialism is not a phenomenon which has grown up in Germany with the malicious intent of thwarting League efforts at revision, but a movement which arose because for fifteen years the most natural human and social rights of a great nation had been suppressed and denied redress.

And I personally take exception at seeing foreign states- men stand up and call me guilty of having broken my word because I have now put these revisions through.

On the contrary I pledged my sacred word to the German people to do away with the Treaty of Versailles and to restore to them their natural and vital rights as a great nation.

The extent to which I am securing these vital rights is modest.

This I ask: If forty-six million Englishmen claim the right to rule over forty million square kilometers of the earth, it cannot be wrong for eighty-two million Germans to demand the right to live on 800,000 square kilometers, to till their fields and to follow their trades and callings, and if they further demand the restitution of those colonial possessions which formerly were their

property, which they had not taken away from anybody by robbery or war but honestly acquired by purchase, exchange and treaties. Moreover, in all my demands, I always first tried to obtain revisions by way of negotiation.

I did, it is true, refuse to submit the question of German vital rights to some non-competent international body in the form of humble requests. Just as little as I suppose that Great Britain would plead for respect of her vital interests, so little ought one to expect the same of National Socialist Germany. I have, however, and I must emphasize this fact most solemnly, limited in the extreme the measure of these revisions of the Versailles Treaty.

Notably in all those cases where I did not see any menace to the natural, vital interests of my people, I have myself advised the German nation to hold back. Yet these eighty million people must live somewhere. There exists a fact that not even the Versailles Treaty has been able to destroy; although it has in the most unreasonable manner dissolved States, torn asunder regions economically connected, cut communication lines, etc., yet the people, the living substance of flesh and blood, has remained and will forever remain in the future.

It cannot be denied that since the German people has found its resurrection through National Socialism, the relation existing between Germany and the surrounding nations has been cleared up to a great extent.

The uncertainty that today is weighing down the common life of nations is not due to German demands, but to the malignant insinuations published in the so-called democracies.

The German demands themselves were formulated in a very clear and precise way. They have, it is true, found their fulfillment not thanks to the insight of the League of Nations but thanks to the dynamics of natural development.

The aim of the German foreign policy as pursued by me has never been other than to guarantee the existence - that is to say, the life - of the German people, to remove the injustice and nonsense contained in a treaty which not only destroyed Germany economically but has drawn the victor nations into disaster as well.

For the rest, however, our whole work of rebuilding was concerned with the home affairs of the Reich and no country in the world had a greater longing for peace than the German people. It was fortunate for humanity and no misfortune at all that I succeeded in removing the craziest, most impossible clauses of the Versailles Treaty by peaceful methods and without compromising foreign statesmen in the internal politics of their countries.

That some details of this action may have been painful to certain interested parties is comprehensible. But the merit is all the greater for the fact that this reorganization was brought about without bloodshed in all cases but the last one.

The last revision of this treaty could have been brought about in exactly the same peaceful way had not two circumstances I have mentioned had the contrary effect. That is chiefly the fault of those who not only took no pleasure in the former peaceful revision, but on the contrary complained of the fact that by peaceful methods a new Central Europe was being built up; that is to say, a Central Europe that was able once more to give its inhabitants work and bread.

As I have already mentioned, it was one of the aims of the Government of the Reich to clear up the relation between ourselves and our neighbors. Allow me to point out some facts that cannot be refuted by the scribbles of international press liars.

First. Germany has concluded non-aggression pacts with the Baltic States. Her interests there are of an exclusively economic nature.

Second. In former times Germany never had any conflict of interests or indeed litigation points with the Northern States and she has none today either.

Third. Germany has taken no steps in regard to the German territory handed over to Denmark under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles; she has, on the contrary, established local and friendly relations with Denmark. We have claimed no revision, but we have concluded a non-aggression pact with Denmark. Our relations with that country are thus directed toward unswervingly loyal and friendly co-operation.

Fourth. Holland: the new Reich has endeavored to continue the traditional friendship with Holland; it did not take over any differences between the two States nor did it create new ones.

Fifth. Belgium: immediately after I had taken over the Government I tried to establish friendly relations with Belgium. I renounced any revision as well as any desire for revision. The Reich has put forward no claim which might in any way have been regarded as a threat to Belgium.

Sixth. Switzerland: Germany adopted the same attitude toward Switzerland. The Reich Government has never given the slightest cause for doubt regarding their desires to establish friendly relations with the country. Moreover, they themselves have never brought forward any complaint regarding the relations between the two countries.

Seventh. Immediately after the Anschluss [with Austria] became an accomplished fact, I informed Yugoslavia that the frontier in common with that country would henceforth be regarded as unalterable by Germany and that we wished only to live in peace and friendship with that country.

Eighth. The bond which binds us to Hungary is old and traditional, one of close and sincere friendship. In this instance, too, our frontiers are unalterable.

Ninth. Slovakia appealed to Germany of her own accord for assistance in connection with her establishment as a State. Her independence is recognized and not infringed upon by the Reich.

Tenth. However, it is not only with these states but also with the Great Powers that Germany has improved and settled those relations which to a certain extent had been adversely affected by the Treaty of Versailles.

My first step was to bring about an alteration in the relations between Italy and the Reich. The existing frontiers between these two States have been formally recognized as unalterable by both countries. Any possibility of a clash of interests of a territorial nature has been removed. One-time enemies during the World War, they have in the meantime become sincere friends.

Establishment of friendly relations was not the final development, but, in the periods which followed, this led to the signing of a cordial pact based on our mutual philosophies and political interests which has proved itself to be an important factor in European co-operation.

My chief endeavor, however, has been to rid our relations with France of all trace of ill will and render them tolerable for both nations. I once set forth with the utmost clarity Germany's claims in this domain and have never gone back on that declaration. Return of the Saar territory was one demand which I regarded as an indispensable pre-condition of Franco-German understandings.

After France herself had found a just solution of this problem, Germany had no further claims against France. No such claim exists any longer and no such claim shall ever be put forward. That is to say, I have refused even to mention the problem of Alsace-Lorraine not because I was forced to keep silent, but because this matter does not constitute a problem which could ever interfere with Franco-German relations.

I accepted the decision made in 1919 and refused to consider ever embarking upon war for the sake of a question which, comparatively speaking, is of slight importance for Germany's vital interests, but which is certainly likely to involve every second generation in a deadly war fear. France realized this.

It is impossible for any French statesman to get up and declare I have ever made any demands upon France the fulfillment of which would be incompatible with French honor or French interest. It is, however, true that instead of demands I have always expressed to France my desire to bury forever our ancient enmity and bring together these two nations, both of which have such glorious pasts.

Among the German people, I have done my utmost to eradicate the idea of everlasting enmity and to inculcate in its place a respect for the great achievements of the French nation and for its history, just as every German soldier has the greatest respect for the feats of the French Army. I have devoted no less effort to the achievement of an Anglo-German understanding, nay, more than that, of an Anglo-German friendship.

At no time and in no place have I ever acted contrary to British interests. Unfortunately I have only too often been forced to guard against instances of British interference in German affairs, even in cases which did not concern Great Britain in the least. I actually considered it as one of my life aims to reconcile these two peoples, not only through mutual understanding but through inner sympathy.

The German nation has gladly followed my lead in this respect. If my endeavors have been unsuccessful, it is only because of an animosity on the part of certain British statesmen and journalists, which has deeply affected me personally.

They made no secret of the fact that - for reasons which are unfathomable to us - their sole aim was to seize the first opportunity in order to resume the fight with Germany. The fewer reasons of substantial nature these men have for their schemes, the more they attempt to motivate their actions with empty phrases and assertions.

But I believe even today that there can only be real peace in Europe and throughout the world if Germany and England come to an understanding. Because of this conviction I have often shown the way to an understanding. If in the end there was not the desired result, it was really not my fault.

Finally, I now also attempted to bring the relations between the Reich and Soviet Russia to a normal and, in the end, to a friendly basis. Thanks to a similar trend of thought on the part of Mr. Stalin these endeavors have now been realized. Now with that State lasting and friendly relations have been established, the effect of which will be a blessing to both nations.

Thus the revision of the Versailles Treaty carried through by me did not cause any chaos in Europe, but on the contrary produced the prerequisite of clear, stable and bearable conditions.

Only those who detest this order of things in Europe and wish for disorder can feel hostile to these actions. If, however, certain people think themselves obliged to reject with a hypocritical air

the method by which a tolerable order of things was established in Central Europe, then my only reply to them is that in the end it is not so much the method but the useful result that counts.

Before I came into power Central Europe, that is to say not only Germany but also the surrounding States, was sinking into the hopeless distress of unemployment and production had decreased, involving an automatic jump in commodity consumption. The standard of living went down. Distress and misery were the result.

No criticizing foreign statesman can deny that not only in the old Reich but also in all the territory now merged with it, it has become possible to remove these indications of decay in the face of the most adverse conditions.

It has thus been proved that only as an entity is this Central European space capable of existence and that whoever breaks up that entity commits a crime against millions of people.

To have wiped out that crime does not amount to a breach of my word, but to me is honor itself; I am proud of it as my deed before history.

Neither the German people nor myself has taken an oath on the Treaty of Versailles; I have merely taken an oath on the welfare of my people, who gave me my mandate and on the welfare of those whom destiny has placed within our living space, thus inseparably binding them to our own welfare.

To guarantee the existence and thus the life of all of them is my sole concern.

Any attempt to criticize, judge or reject my actions from the rostrum of international presumption has no foundation before history and personally leaves me stone-cold. I was called to my post by the confidence vested in me by the German people, whose attitude toward me is only strengthened by any such attempt at criticism or interference from abroad.

Moreover, previous to each single revision I have put forward proposals. I had attempted, by means of negotiations, to achieve and secure what was absolutely indispensable. In a certain number of cases I was successful. In other cases, I am sorry to say, my readiness to negotiate and perhaps also the small extent of my demands and the modesty of my proposals were interpreted as a sign of weakness and therefore rejected. Nobody could have regretted this more than I did.

There are, however, in the life of nations certain necessities which, if they are not brought about by peaceful methods, must be realized by force, however regrettable this appears, not only to the life of the individual citizen but also to the life of the community. It is undeniable that the greater interests common to all must never be impaired by the stubbornness or ill will of individuals and communities. To Poland, too, I made the most moderate proposals.

They were not only rejected, but on the contrary brought forth the general mobilization of that State, for which reasons were advanced which proved conclusively exactly that it was the very modesty of my proposals which was considered a confirmation of my weakness, nay, even of my fear. Really, such an experience is apt to make anyone shrink from ever again making any reasonable and moderate proposals.

Also at present I once more read in certain newspapers that every attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement of relations between Germany on the one hand and France and England on the other was doomed to failure, and that any proposal in that direction only proved that I, filled with apprehension, anticipated Germany's collapse and that I only made such a proposal out of cowardice, or from a bad conscience.

When, irrespective of all this, I have expressed my ideas on this problem, I am prepared to appear in the eyes of these people as a coward or a finished man. I can afford to run that risk, because the judgment to be passed upon me by history will not, thank God, be written by these miserable scribblers but is established by my life's work, and because I do not care very much about any judgment that may be passed upon me by these people at the time.

My prestige is sufficient for me to allow myself such an attitude, because the question of whether my following thoughts are actually dictated by fear or desperation will in any case be settled by the future course of events. Today I can only regret that those people, whose bloodthirstiness cannot have enough of war, unfortunately are not where the war is actually being fought, and never were at such places where people were shooting it out.

I can very well understand that there are interested parties who profit more from war than from peace, and I also understand that for a certain variety of international journalist it is more interesting to report on war than on peaceful activities or cultural achievements, which they are incapable of either judging or understanding. And finally it is clear to me that there is a certain Jewish international capitalism and journalism that has no feeling at all in common with the people whose interests they pretend to represent, but who, like Herostrates of old, regard incendiarism as the greatest success of their lives. But there is still another reason why I feel obliged to voice my opinion.

When reading certain international press publications, or listening to speeches of various capitalist glorifiers of war, I consider myself entitled to speak and reply in the name of those who are forced to serve as the living substance for the mental activities of these formulators of war aims, that living substance to which I myself belonged as an unknown soldier for more than four years during the Great War.

It is, perhaps, a magnificent effect when a statesman or a journalist stands up and in enthusiastic words announces the necessity of removing the regime of another country in the name of democracy or something similar. Practical execution of these glorious slogans, however, has quite a different aspect.

Newspaper articles are being written today which are sure of an enthusiastic reception by the distinguished public. Realization of demands therein contained, however, is apt to arouse much less enthusiasm; I shall not deal with the powers of judgment or the gifts of such people. Whatever they may write has no bearing on the real nature of such a struggle.

These scribblers announced before the Polish campaign that German infantry perhaps was not bad, but that tank and mechanized units in general were inferior and would be, sure to break down in action.

Now, after the defeat of Poland, the same people brazenly assert that the Polish armies have collapsed only because of German tank formations and other mechanized troops, but that, on the other hand, German infantry had deteriorated most remarkably and had got the worst of it in every clash with the Polish.

'In this fact,' so one such writer actually says, 'one has the free right to see a favorable symptom for the course of the war in the West, and the French soldier will know how to take advantage of this.'

I think so, too, provided he has read that article and can remember it later on. He will then probably box the ears of these military soothsayers. But unfortunately that will be impossible, since these people never will put their theories on inferiority of the German infantry to a personal

test on the battlefields, but will merely describe these qualities from their editorial sanctums.

Six weeks - let us say fourteen days - of concentrated shellfire, and these war propagandists would soon think differently. They always are talking of the necessities of world politics, but they have no knowledge of military realities.

I do know them and for that reason I consider it my duty to speak here, even at risk of the warmonger again seeing in my speech evidence of my anxiety and symptoms of the degree of my despair.

Why should this war in the West be fought? For restoration of Poland? Poland of the Versailles Treaty will never rise again. This is guaranteed by two of the largest States in the world. Final re-organization of this territory and the question of re-establishment of the Polish State are problems which will not be solved by a war in the West but exclusively by Russia on the one hand and Germany on the other.

Furthermore, the elimination of the influence of these two Powers within the territories concerned would not produce a new State but utter chaos.

The problems awaiting solution there will never be solved either at the conference table or in editorial offices, but by the work of decades. It is not enough that a few statesmen who are not really concerned with the fate of the people affected get together and pass resolutions. It is necessary that someone who has himself a share in the life of these territories takes over the task of restoring really enduring conditions there. The ability of the Western democracies to restore such ordered conditions has at least in recent times not been proved.

The example of Palestine shows it would be better to concentrate on the tasks at hand and solve these in a reasonable manner instead of meddling with problems which lie within the vital spheres of interest of other nations and could certainly be better solved by them. At any rate, Germany has in her Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia not only established peace and order but, above all, has laid the foundation for a new economic prosperity and increasing understanding between the two nations. England still has much to accomplish before she can point to similar results in her Protectorate in Palestine.

One also realizes that it would be senseless to annihilate millions of men and to destroy property worth millions in order to reconstruct a State which at its very birth was termed an abortion by all those not of Polish extraction.

What other reason exists? Has Germany made any demands of England which might threaten the British Empire or endanger its existence? On the contrary, Germany has made no such demands on either France or England.

But if this war is really to be waged only in order to give Germany a new regime, that is to say, in order to destroy the present Reich once more and thus to create a new Treaty of Versailles, then millions of human lives will be sacrificed in vain, for neither will the German Reich go to pieces nor will a second Treaty of Versailles be made. And even should this come to pass after three, four, or even eight years of war then this second Versailles would once more become the source of fresh conflict in the future.

In any event, a settlement of the world's problems carried out without consideration of the vital interests of its most powerful nations could not possibly, after the lapse of from five to ten years, end in any other way than that attempt made twenty years ago which is now ended. No, this war in the West cannot settle any problems except perhaps the ruined finances of certain armament

manufacturers, newspaper owners, or other international war profiteers.

Two problems are ripe for discussion today.

First, the settlement of the problems arising from the disintegration of Poland and, second, the problem of eliminating those international difficulties which endanger the political and economic existence of the nations.

What then are the aims of the Reich Government as regards the adjustment of conditions within the territory to the west of the German-Soviet line of demarcation which has been recognized as Germany's sphere of influence?

First, the creation of a Reich frontier which, as has already been emphasized, shall be in accordance with existing historical, ethnographical and economic conditions.

Second, the disposition of the entire living space according to the various nationalities; that is to say, the solution of the problems affecting the minorities which concern not only this area but nearly all the States in the Southwest of Europe.

Third, in this connection: An attempt to reach a solution and settlement of the Jewish problem.

Fourth, reconstruction of transport facilities and economic life in the interest of all those living in this area.

Fifth, a guarantee for the security of this entire territory and sixth, formation of a Polish State so constituted and governed as to prevent its becoming once again either a hotbed of anti-German activity or a center of intrigue against Germany and Russia.

In addition to this, an attempt must immediately be made to wipe out or at least to mitigate the ill effects of war; that is to say, the adoption of practical measures for alleviation of the terrible distress prevailing there.

These problems can, as I have already emphasized, perhaps be discussed but never solved at the conference table.

If Europe is really sincere in her desire for peace, then the States in Europe ought to be grateful that Russia and Germany are prepared to transform this hotbed into a zone of peaceful development and that these two countries will assume the responsibility and bear the burdens inevitably involved.

For the Reich this project, since it cannot be undertaken in an imperialistic spirit, is a task which will take fifty to a hundred years to perform.

Justification for this activity on Germany's part lies in the political organizing of this territory as well as in its economic development. In the long run, of course, all Europe will benefit from it. Second, and in my opinion by far the most important task, is the creation of not only a belief in, but also a sense of, European security.

For this it is necessary first that aims in the foreign policy of European States should be made perfectly clear.

As far as Germany is concerned the Reich Government is ready to give a thorough and

exhaustive exposition of the aims of its foreign policy.

In so doing, they begin by stating that the Treaty of Versailles is now regarded by them as obsolete; in other words, that the government of the German Reich, and with them the whole German people, no longer see cause or reason for any further revision of the Treaty, apart from the demand for adequate colonial possessions justly due to the Reich, namely, in the first instance, for the return of German colonies.

This demand for colonies is based not only on Germany's historical claim to German colonies but above all on her elementary right to a share of the world's resources of raw materials. This demand does not take the form of an ultimatum, nor is it a demand backed by force, but a demand based on political justice and sane economic principles.

Secondly, the demand for a real revival of international economic life, coupled with an extension of trade and commerce, presupposes a reorganization of the international economic system; in other words, of production in the individual States. In order to facilitate the exchange of goods thus produced, however, markets must be organized and a final currency regulation arrived at so that the obstacles in the way of unrestricted trade can be gradually removed.

Thirdly, the most important condition, however, for a real revival of economic life in and outside of Europe is the establishment of an unconditionally guaranteed peace and of a sense of security on the part of the individual nations.

This security will not only be rendered possible by the final sanctioning of the European status, but above all by the reduction of armaments to a reasonable and economically tolerable level. An essential part of this necessary sense of security, however, is a clear definition of the legitimate use of an application of certain modern armaments which can, at any given moment, have such a devastating effect on the pulsating life of every nation and hence create a permanent sense of insecurity.

In my previous speeches in the Reichstag I made proposals with this end in view. At that time they were rejected -maybe for the simple reason that they were made by me. I believe, however, that a sense of national security will not return to Europe until clear and binding international agreements have provided a comprehensive definition of the legitimate and illegitimate use of armaments.

A Geneva convention once succeeded in prohibiting, in civilized countries at least, the killing of wounded, ill treatment of prisoners, war against noncombatants, etc., and just as it was possible gradually to achieve universal observance of this statute, a way must surely be found to regulate aerial warfare, use of poison gas and submarines, etc., and also so to define contraband that war will lose its terrible character of conflict waged against women and children and against noncombatants in general. A growing horror of certain methods of warfare will of its own accord lead to their abolition and thus they will become obsolete.

In the war with Poland I endeavored to restrict aerial warfare to objectives of so-called military importance, or only to employ it to combat active resistance at a given point. But it must surely be possible to emulate the Red Cross and to draw up some universally valid international regulations. It is only when this is achieved that peace can reign, particularly in our densely populated continent - a peace which, uncontaminated by suspicion and fear, will provide the only possible condition for real economic prosperity.

I do not believe that there is any responsible statesman in Europe who does not in his heart desire prosperity for his people. But such a desire can only be realized if all the nations inhabiting this

continent decide to go to work together. To assist in assuring this co-operation must be the aim of every man who is sincerely struggling for the future of his own people.

To achieve this great end, the leading nations of this continent will one day have to come together in order to draw up, accept, and guarantee a statute on a comprehensive basis which will insure for them all a sense of security, of calm - in short, of peace.

Such a conference could not possibly be held without the most thorough preparation; this is, without exact elucidation of every point at issue.

It is equally impossible that such a conference, which is to determine the fate of this continent for many years to come, could carry on its deliberations while cannon are thundering or mobilized armies are bringing pressure to bear upon it.

If, however, these problems must be solved sooner or later, then it would be more sensible to tackle the solution before millions of men are first uselessly sent to death and milliards of riches destroyed.

Continuation of the present state of affairs in the West is unthinkable. Each day will soon demand increasing sacrifices.

Perhaps the day will come when France will begin to bombard and demolish Saarbrücken. German artillery will in turn lay Mulhouse in ruins. France will retaliate by bombarding Karlsruhe and Germany in her turn will shell Strasbourg.

Then the French artillery will fire at Freiburg, and the German at Kolmar or Schlettstadt. Long-range guns will then be set up and from both sides will strike deeper and deeper and whatever cannot be reached by the long-distance guns will be destroyed from the air.

And that will be very interesting for certain international journalists and very profitable for the airplane, arms, and munitions manufacturers, but appalling for the victims.

And this battle of destruction will not be confined to the land. No, it will reach far out over the sea.

Today there are no longer any islands. And the national wealth of Europe will be scattered in the form of shells and the vigor of every nation will be sapped on the battlefields.

One day, however, there will again be a frontier between Germany and France, but instead of flourishing towns there will be ruins and endless graveyards.

Mr. Churchill and his companions may interpret these opinions of mine as weakness or cowardice if they like. I need not occupy myself with what they think; I make these statements simply because it goes without saying that I wish to spare my own people this suffering.

If, however, the opinions of Messrs. Churchill and followers should prevail, this statement will have been my last.

Then we shall fight. Neither force of arms nor lapse of time will conquer Germany. There never will be another November 1918 in German history. It is infantile to hope for the disintegration of our people.

Mr. Churchill may be convinced that Great Britain will win. I do not doubt for a single moment that Germany will be victorious.

Destiny will decide who is right.

One thing only is certain. In the course of world history, there have never been two victors, but very often only losers. This seems to me to have been the case in the last war.

May those peoples and their leaders who are of the same mind now make their reply. And let those who consider war to be the better solution reject my outstretched hand.

As Fuehrer of the German people and Chancellor of the Reich, I can thank God at this moment that he has so wonderfully blessed us in our hard struggle for what is our right, and beg Him that we and all other nations may find the right way, so that not only the German people but all Europe may once more be granted the blessing of peace.